



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON D C 20463

JUL 22 2004

Salvatore Trovato
274 Lakeview Avenue
Waterbury, Connecticut 06705

RE: MUR 5453
Salvatore Trovato

Dear Mr. Trovato:

On May 18, 2004, the Federal Election Commission ("the Commission") found that there is reason to believe you violated 2 U.S.C. §§ 441a(a)(1)(A) and 441a(a)(3), provisions of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended ("the Act"). The Factual and Legal Analysis, which formed a basis for the Commission's finding, is attached for your information.

You may submit any factual or legal materials that you believe are relevant to the Commission's consideration of this matter. Please submit such materials to the General Counsel's Office within 15 days of your receipt of this letter. Where appropriate, statements should be submitted under oath. In the absence of additional information, the Commission may find probable cause to believe that a violation has occurred and proceed with conciliation.

If you are interested in pursuing pre-probable cause conciliation, you should so request in writing. See 11 C.F.R. § 111.18(d). Upon receipt of the request, the Office of the General Counsel will make recommendations to the Commission either proposing an agreement in settlement of the matter or recommending declining that pre-probable cause conciliation be pursued. The Office of the General Counsel may recommend that pre-probable cause conciliation not be entered into at this time so that it may complete its investigation of the matter. Further, the Commission will not entertain requests for pre-probable cause conciliation after briefs on probable cause have been mailed to the respondent.

Requests for extensions of time will not be routinely granted. Requests must be made in writing at least five days prior to the due date of the response and specific good cause must be demonstrated. In addition, the Office of the General Counsel ordinarily will not give extensions beyond 20 days.

If you intend to be represented by counsel in this matter, please advise the Commission by completing the enclosed form stating the name, address, and telephone number of such

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counsel, and authorizing such counsel to receive any notifications and other communications from the Commission.

This matter will remain confidential in accordance with 2 U.S.C. §§ 437g(a)(4)(B) and 437g(a)(12)(A), unless you notify the Commission in writing that you wish the investigation to be made public.

For your information, we have enclosed a brief description of the Commission's procedures for handling possible violations of the Act. If you have any questions, please contact Christine C. Gallagher, the attorney assigned to this matter, at (202) 694-1650.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bradley A. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bradley A. Smith
Chairman

Enclosures
Factual and Legal Analysis
Procedures
Designation of Counsel Form

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FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

RESPONDENT: Salvatore Trovato

MUR: 5453

I. GENERATION OF THE MATTER

This matter was generated based on information ascertained by the Federal Election Commission ("the Commission") in the normal course of carrying out its supervisory responsibilities. See 2 U.S.C. § 437g(a)(2).¹ At issue is whether Salvatore Trovato made an excessive individual contribution to Philip Giordano ("the candidate") in connection with a certificate of deposit used as collateral to obtain a \$300,000 loan from Patriot National Bank ("the Bank") for the Giordano for U.S. Senate Committee ("the Committee").

II. BACKGROUND

Philip Giordano was a candidate for the office of United States Senator from Connecticut in the 2000 election. The Committee² filed a 2000 April Quarterly Report on April 19, 2000,

¹ All of the facts in this matter occurred prior to the effective date of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 ("BCRA"), Pub. L. 107-155, 116 Stat. 81 (2002). Accordingly, unless specifically noted to the contrary, all citations to the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended ("the Act"), herein are as it read prior to the effective date of BCRA and all citations to the Commission's regulations herein are to the 2002 edition of Title 11, Code of Federal Regulations, which was published prior to the Commission's promulgation of any regulations under BCRA.

² According to Statements of Organization on file with the Commission, on February 8, 2000, James Paolino was named as treasurer of the Giordano Congressional Exploratory Committee. On March 17, 2000, Michael Blumenthal was named as treasurer of the Giordano for U.S. Senate Committee, the candidate's principal campaign committee. On July 15, 2000, Thomas M. Ariola, Jr. was named as deputy treasurer of the principal campaign committee. A subsequent letter from Mr. Paolino to the Commission explained that the 2000 July Quarterly Report marked the termination of the candidate's Exploratory Committee and the commencement of his principal campaign committee.

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disclosing a \$200,000 loan from the Bank, obtained on February 25, 2000.³ The Schedule C-1 included with the report showed the collateral for this loan as cash on deposit and future contributions to be received by the Committee. The Schedule C showed both the candidate and his father-in-law, Mr. Trovato, as co-guarantors of the loan.⁴ Mr. Trovato was on the Board of Directors of the Bank at this time.⁵

By cover letter signed by the candidate, the Committee, on July 17, 2000, filed an amended 2000 July Quarterly Report, disclosing information about a loan incurred on July 14, 2000 from the Bank in the amount of \$300,000.⁶ The Schedule C-1 showed the collateral for the loan to be a certificate of deposit valued at \$300,000 and the Schedule C lists the candidate as guaranteeing the entire \$300,000. The attached loan document describes the collateral as "Patriot National Bank Certificate of Deposit in the Name of Dawn Giordano under Account No.

³ The Commission received an undated letter from Mr. Paolino stating that the Giordano Congressional Exploratory Committee obtained the original \$200,000 loan. The letter states, "in anticipation of the termination of the Exploratory Committee, the Giordano for U.S. Senate Committee has assumed this loan and increased its obligation to a total of \$300,000." For simplicity's sake, this analysis will refer to the loan as an obligation of "the Committee."

⁴ The Committee's 2000 July Quarterly Report, filed on July 10, 2000, continued to disclose the \$200,000 loan, but neither the candidate nor Mr. Trovato were listed as guarantors and the Schedule C-1 was blank.

⁵ The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Form 10-K for Patriot National Bancorp, Inc., a one-bank holding company for Patriot National Bank, lists Mr. Trovato as one of the Directors for Bancorp for the Fiscal Year ending December 31, 2000. *See also* U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Schedule 14A, Proxy Statement, April 28, 2000 (according to the Proxy Statement, Mr. Trovato has been Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bancorp and Patriot National Bank since 1995, and owns 103,258 shares of stock, or 4.72% of Bancorp's outstanding shares); *see also* David Hammer, *Giordano Campaign Loan Faces Scrutiny*, REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN, August 5, 2001 (reported that Mr. Trovato holds 118,658 shares of stock of Patriot National Bancorp, Inc., equal to 4.89% of Bancorp's outstanding shares).

⁶ Although the Schedule C-1 accompanying the report states that the disclosed loan was not restructured, a Schedule C-1 filed with the Committee's Second Amended 2000 July Quarterly Report shows that the \$300,000 loan represented a restructuring of the loan incurred in February 2000. *See also* footnote 4.

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On August 30, 2000, the Committee filed a second amended 2000 July Quarterly Report, which included a cover letter, a revised Schedule C-1 and copy of a revised loan agreement with the Bank for the \$300,000 loan. Those documents appear to show that the collateral for the loan was (1) the candidate's one-half interest in a certificate of deposit in the amount of \$300,000 (\$150,000), (2) the candidate's one-half interest in real estate owned by him and his spouse (\$110,000), and possibly (3) the Committee's cash-on-hand or future contributions and receipts.

The certificate of deposit is identified as a "Patriot National Bank Certificate of Deposit in the names of Dawn Giordano & Philip A. Giordano under account _____ the same account number in which the certificate of deposit in the name only of Dawn Giordano had formerly been shown. An attached sheet to the revised loan agreement appears to show an opening of an account on July 14, 2000 with an initial deposit of a check for \$300,000, and a withholding statement signed only by Dawn Giordano. On the same sheet, additional information is displayed for what appears to be account number _____ (the number is difficult to read) in the names of the candidate and his wife, showing it to be a "certificate of deposit" type account, with the signature of the candidate followed by the date of _____ and the signature of his wife followed by the date of _____

The cover letter accompanying the August 30 filing purports to be proffering an "addendum" to the Committee's July 17, 2000 filing as an "attempt[] to correct all previous errors and . . . to conform our report to FEC regulations." According to the cover letter:

As you know, the previous report collateralized the loan above mentioned with a Certificate of Deposit of \$300,000 held in the name of Dawn Ann Giordano, Philip A. Giordano's spouse. The Certificate of Deposit was a gift made to Mr. and Mrs. Giordano from Mrs. Giordano's father. Similar gifts were made to all Mrs. Giordano's siblings and their spouses. The Certificate was given jointly in both names. This would allow us to collateralize \$150,000.00 of said loan with Mr. Giordano's half interest in the Certificate.

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1 In response to two Requests for Additional Information ("RFAI") dated September 19,
2 2000, and Second Notices dated October 12, 2000, the Committee filed amendments to its 2000
3 April and July Quarterly Reports on November 1, 2000.⁷ The cover letter dated October 28,
4 2000 states that the original \$200,000 loan, due to a misunderstanding on the part of the
5 Committee and the Bank, "was made in violation of FEC rules," but that the "loan was corrected
6 as to FEC requirements and also increased to an indebtedness of \$300,000." According to the
7 cover letter, the \$300,000 loan

8 was secured with one half of a certificate of deposit held jointly by Mr. And
9 [sic] Mrs. Giordano, on [sic] half the equity in Mr. and Mrs. Giordano's jointly
10 held home, and cash on deposit in the Senate Committee account. The bank was
11 satisfied that this was adequate collateral for this line of credit. I am under the
12 impression that this also satisfies FEC requirements. The certificate of deposit
13 was originally a family gift given to the Giordano family. The timing of the gift
14 coincided with a financial event with the family. It was not related to the Senate
15 committee and would have happened regardless of the Senate race.

16
17 **III. ANALYSIS**

18 The circumstances surrounding the receipt and ownership of the certificate of deposit
19 raise issues as to a possible excessive contribution from Mr. Trovato. The Act prohibits any
20 person from making contributions "to any candidate and his authorized political committee with
21 respect to any election for Federal office which, in the aggregate, exceeds \$1,000." 2 U.S.C.
22 § 441a(a)(1)(A). The Act also prohibits any individual from making "contributions aggregating
23 more than \$25,000 in any calendar year." 2 U.S.C. § 441a(a)(3). Contributions from members
24 of a candidate's family are subject to the same limits that apply to any other individuals. See S.
25 Conf. Rep. No. 93-1237, at 58 (1974), *reprinted in* 1974 U.S.C.C.A.N. 5587, 5627 ("[T]he

⁷ The RFAI dated September 19, 2000 inquired about the original \$200,000 loan and asked the Committee to provide the Schedules C and C-1 pertaining to that loan. On November 27, 2000 the Committee amended its 2000 July Quarterly Report for a fourth time and included the Schedules C and C-1 as requested

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1 immediate family of any candidate shall be subject to the contribution limitations established by
2 this legislation.....[A]n immediate family member would be permitted merely to make
3 contributions to the candidate in amounts not greater than \$1,000 for each election involved.”);
4 *see also Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 53 n.59 (1976) (upholding application of contribution
5 limitations to family members).

6 Giordano was a candidate by July 14, 2000 when Mr. Trovato purportedly gifted the
7 \$300,000 certificate of deposit.⁸ As noted *supra*, the Committee asserted that it realized that the
8 original \$200,000 loan, for which Mr. Trovato was a guarantor, “violated FEC rules”
9 (presumably because Mr. Trovato’s guarantee would constitute an excessive contribution on its
10 face pursuant to 2 U.S.C. §§ 441a(a)(1)(a) and (a)(3) and 11 C.F.R. §§ 110.1(b) and 110.5(b)).
11 The timing of the transmission of the certificate of deposit (or the funds to purchase it) to be used
12 as collateral for the restructured \$300,000 loan indicates that it may have been an attempt to
13 accomplish a similar result through alternative means.

14 The conflicting information concerning whether the certificate of deposit was in the name
15 of the candidate’s wife alone or in both names, and the confusing account opening information,
16 bear further scrutiny. If Mr. Trovato gifted the certificate of deposit to both the candidate and his
17 wife, as the Committee’s August 30, 2000 cover letter, discussed *supra* asserts, then that gift
18 might constitute an excessive contribution by him to the candidate.⁹

⁸ Giordano’s Committee reported \$55,900 in contributions and \$197,900 in expenditures on its 2000 April Quarterly Report. These figures are well in excess of the threshold amount of \$5,000 in aggregate contributions or aggregate expenditures required to meet the definition of the term “candidate” under 2 U.S.C. § 431(2).

⁹ Candidates for federal office may make unlimited expenditures from personal funds, including from gifts of a personal nature which had been customarily received prior to candidacy. *See* 11 C.F.R. § 110.10(b)(2). However, the Commission currently lacks information that the certificate of deposit fits into this category.

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1 Based upon the available information, it appears that Mr. Trovato made an excessive
2 contribution to the candidate or the Committee in violation of 2 U.S.C. §§ 441a(a) (1) and (3).¹⁰
3 Therefore, there is reason to believe Salvatore Trovato violated 2 U.S.C. §§ 441a(a)(1)(A) and
4 441a(a)(3).

¹⁰ Any candidate who receives a contribution in connection with his or her campaign shall be considered as having received that contribution as an agent of his or her authorized committee. See 2 U.S.C. § 432(e)(2).

One news article published in August 2001 quoted Charles Howell, President and Chief Executive Officer of Patriot National Bank as saying, "[t]he loan was re-paid at maturity [Feb. 24, 2001]. The details regarding the loan were reported to the Federal Elections [sic] Commission." David Hammer, *Giordano Loan Faces Scrutiny*, REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN, August 5, 2001. The article also reports that although Mr. Ariola told the reporter that in July 2001 he planned to file the FEC disclosure reports concerning the loan's repayment, the candidate was arrested in July and federal agents took possession of all the Committee's records at the time of his arrest, preventing Mr. Ariola from actually filing the reports concerning the loan's repayment. See *id.* None of the Committee's reports on file with the FEC to date disclose any information about the reported loan's repayment.

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